

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 COLOMB 02988 161150Z
ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 /018 W
-----051242 161302Z /46

R 161101Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7928

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2988

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, CE

SUBJ: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON FOREIGN MINISTER, A.C.S.
HAMEED

REF: STATE 185477

1. A.C.S. HAMEED, A VETERAN UNITED NATIONAL PARTY (UNP) POLITICIAN, HAS BEEN APPOINTED FOREIGN MINISTER, THE FIRST TIME IN SRI LANKA'S HISTORY THAT THIS PORTFOLIO HAS NOT BEEN RETAINED BY THE PRIME MINISTER. HE IS THE FIRST MOSLEM ENTRUSTED WITH HANDLING THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS.
2. IT HAD BEEN RUMORED THAT HAMEED WANTED THE EDUCATION PORTFOLIO, BUT SEVERAL MONTHS PRIOR TO THE ELECTION, HE REPORTEDLY ASKED TO BE FOREIGN MINISTER. ACCORDING TO AN MFA OFFICIAL, HAMEED HAS AN EXCELLENT GRASP OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HAS QUICKLY ESTABLISHED HIMSELF IN HIS JOB AND BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE CAREER FOREIGN SERVICE. HAMEED HAS TRAVELED WIDELY, INCLUDING VISITS TO THE U.S., THE U.K., JAPAN, AND GERMANY. IN ALL OF THOSE PLACES, HE TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS, HE WAS A KEEN STUDENT OF THEIR POLITICAL SYSTEMS. HE SEEMS TO BE PARTICULARLY CONVERSANT ON JAPANESE POLITICS AND SOCIETY.
3. HAMEED, LONG INTERESTED IN FOREIGN POLICY, WAS A MEMBER OF CEYLON'S DELEGATION TO THE UN DURING THE PERIOD 1965-70.

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THERE IS NOTHING IN EMBASSY FILES REFLECTING HIS VIEWS ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS; HE RECENTLY, HOWEVER, STATED PUBLICLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT RECOGNIZE ISRAEL UNTIL IT GIVES UP THE AREAS FORCIBLY OCCUPIED DURING THE 1967 ARAB-ISRAEL WAR.

4. A 50-YEAR OLD DEVOUT MOSLEM, HAMEED IS SHORT AND EXTREMELY SOFT-SPOKEN IN CONVERSATION - IT PAYS TO SIT AS

CLOSE TO HIM AS POSSIBLE. HE IS INVOLVED IN NUMEROUS RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND ATTENDS THE MOSQUE REGULARLY.

5. DESPITE HIS SOFT SPOKENNESS, HAMEED IS DESCRIBED AS BEING OPEN, GREGARIOUS, AND PUBLICITY CONSCIOUS. HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF TO BE A PERSUASIVE SPEAKER AND HAS REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE HOPES TO USE THAT TALENT TO GOOD ADVANTAGE IN SEEKING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.

6. HAMEED SMOKES AND AT PUBLIC GATHERINGS WILL TAKE A DRINK, USUALLY BRANDY. AT SMALL, PRIVATE AFFAIRS, HE REPORTEDLY WILL DRINK MORE FREELY. HE GIVES THE GENERAL IMPRESSION OF ILL HEALTH. FROM THE COLOR OF HIS FACE, HIS SOMETIMES UNEASY MOVEMENTS, AND HIS REFUSAL OF SUGAR, HE MAY BE DIABETIC. HAMEED HAS BEEN FRIENDLY WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS AND HAS BEEN DECIDELY PRO-AMERICAN. HIS ENGLISH IS GOOD AND NO INTERPRETER IS REQUIRED.
WRIGGINS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 16-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977COLOMB02988
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770295-0075
Format: TEL
From: COLOMBO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770859/aaaabxlv.tel
Line Count: 80
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8c08635a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 185477
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1592918
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON FOREIGN MINISTER, A.C.S. HAMEED
TAGS: PINR, CE, (HAMEED, A C S)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8c08635a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009